

that generations both present and future will carry them forward.

We all long for America to return to those simple values and not stray off course. Think about what some of those values are. They are comradery, service, sense of community, putting in a hard day's work, and family.

If you were to take the time and travel across North Carolina's Fifth District, you would find salt-of-the-earth people who live and breathe those values. Those values are alive and well in every small business, supermarket, church, community, and neighborhood in the Fifth District and across the entire country.

You see, small-town values are not a euphemism for exclusivity or division. They are values that transcend boundaries such as socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and geography.

Mr. Speaker, I consider myself blessed to have been raised in a small town and to have learned those values at a young age. Throughout my life, I have carried them with me.

It is even more of a blessing that I have been entrusted to serve small towns like Hudson and so many others that are the lifeblood of western North Carolina.

I encourage everyone to visit the town of Hudson and see exactly what I mean. Take some time to learn about the values that small towns across this country are built on and how, over time, they have made such an impact upon everyday people.

The undeniable truth is that small-town values will forever be America's values.

SEPTEMBER JOBS REPORT

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, as a former educator, it is clear to me that the Biden administration needs some serious math tutoring. The September jobs report resembles an incomplete assignment that a student turned in at the very last minute.

Out of 500,000 projected jobs, only 194,000 were added. Five million jobs are still unrecovered in America, and labor participation has slumped to 61.6 percent. It is the worst jobs report of the year, and there are roughly 3 months left to go.

That report rightfully deserves an F, and it tacks on another chapter of this administration making promises it cannot meet. Yet again, the so-called Build Back Better agenda falls flat on its face and the numbers do not lie.

□ 1015

CHILD CARE CRISIS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to spend a few minutes to talk about an October 15 visit to Connecticut by President Biden where he actually put the eyes of the country for a couple of hours on a critical issue

that his Build Back Better agenda is focused on fixing, which is, namely, the crisis in child daycare all across the country.

On Friday, my colleagues and I, as well as President Biden, visited the Capitol Child Development Center, where the executive director, Barbara Jo Warner, laid out very clearly the dilemma that she and her colleagues who are in this very struggling sector are faced with today.

Before COVID, her center had 70 slots for children completely full, with a waiting list. Today, they have 20 children in the same daycare center.

Is it because there is no demand? No, that is not the case. There still is a waiting list of families who are trying to get their kids into daycare.

Her problem is that the staffing that she had prior to COVID has severely diminished, and her ability to attract people back into her program is limited by the fact that she is only able to offer \$13 an hour as a starting wage for people in a very important job for our country as well as families of the children that they take care of.

So we are in a situation where they are in a place where McDonald's pays more, at \$15 an hour, than a daycare center, at \$13 an hour.

It is a problem which is, I think, one of the reasons why the jobs recovery has stalled, particularly for families and women heads-of-household who, again, don't have centers with slots available because of the staffing problem that Ms. Warner described to the President and to the world on Friday.

The Build Back Better legislation, he discussed it, finally, in a different kind of context, in terms of the horse race down here and who is up, who is down, which faction is negotiating what. He focused on the content of the Build Back Better legislation, which is addressed to provide a huge infusion of support for our daycare sector.

What that provision will do is cap the amount of out-of-pocket for families who are using child daycare at 7 percent of income. Today, low- and middle-income families spend between 14 and 35 percent of their income on daycare. If we get this through, we are immediately going to provide savings for families with their kids in daycare.

In Connecticut, looking at a family making \$87,000 a year, that basically would result in weekly savings of \$175 a week, which is definitely a huge boost in terms of working families and middle-class families, which this bill would provide.

Again, I want to emphasize, this is not a Connecticut problem. This is happening all across the country, and the median or the average salary for daycare centers across the country is actually \$12 an hour, a little lower than what the President heard about on Friday.

If we are serious about a real job recovery and giving families the opportunity to really go back to work, why don't we listen to the U.S. Chamber of

Commerce, the largest business organization in the country, which recognized during COVID that support for child daycare is essential, in terms of trying to get working-age families back into the workforce.

Again, the openings are there. I could walk through employers in the State of Connecticut. Electric Boat in my district has about 500 job openings right now. They want to get those Gen Z'ers and millennials trained up and ready to go. But if they don't have a place for their children to be cared for safely and adequately, then we are just basically in a cul-de-sac where this economy is going to be held back.

The Build Back Better agenda is not soft infrastructure. It is right at the heart of whether or not we are going to, as a country, fully recover and grow in the wake of this pandemic.

It is something that hopefully every Member, when the time comes for this package, when that daycare provision is included in there, will think about long and hard because this is not a Connecticut-only issue. This affects every State, red and blue; every district, red and blue; every employer, in red and blue areas of the country. If anyone can't support that, then they are not serious about really helping this country recover from the pandemic.

Again, I thank the President for coming out and really focusing like a laser on this issue. I thank Executive Director Barbara Jo Warner for her clear message to the country.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize this week as National Forest Products Week.

In Pennsylvania, forest products have long been an essential industry by producing logs, lumber, furniture, paper, and more. These are products and materials that Americans nationwide use each and every day.

The forest products industry employs roughly 64,000 Pennsylvanians and generates \$36 billion in total economic impact statewide.

I am proud to represent Pennsylvania's only national forest, the Allegheny National Forest. This incredible forest, established in 1923, spans more than half a million acres in the northern portion of my district, across Forest, Elk, McKean, and Warren Counties.

Whether it is forestry, energy production, timber harvesting, or an abundance of outdoor activities, Allegheny National Forest has it all.

For generations, the ANF has brought economic prosperity to our region, and it is essential that we are able to contribute to the longevity and

sustainability of the Allegheny National Forest.

In my role as Republican leader on the House Agriculture Committee, I am dedicated to putting forth policies that promote natural solutions to keep our forests healthy for generations to come.

These policies include working closely with the Forest Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to manage our forests, foster healthier lands, and allow this economic engine to thrive.

By supporting the Forest Service and encouraging active stewardship, we can support healthy forests and rural communities for generations to come.

Currently, we have two bills focused on improving our forest management: the RESTORE Act from DOUG LAMALFA from California and the FIRE Act from DUSTY JOHNSON from South Dakota. These bills aim to improve and expedite forest management and restoration projects for healthier and more resilient forests.

Of course, we cannot talk about forest products without discussing the environmental benefits of a well-managed forest and forest productivity. We know the best solutions are natural solutions, not burdensome regulations or carbon taxes, but active innovation.

Landowners and foresters are among the strongest environmental advocates in our country. I recognize their efforts and continue to promote forest health by empowering the original stewards of our land.

According to the Forest Service, forests are sequestering 14 percent of all U.S. carbon emissions. That number could nearly double with policies that increase forest management, forest health, and forest production.

Active management, including timbering, holds the greatest potential for sequestering carbon and storing it indefinitely in forest products.

To help encourage new markets for forest products and forest health, I was proud to help lead the Timber Innovation Act. This bipartisan legislation, which was included in the 2018 farm bill, directly supports the development of cross-laminated timber and tall wood building construction.

Mr. Speaker, Forest Products Week is more than forestry or timber harvesting. It is a time to focus on the great resources our forests provide. From a natural habitat for wildlife, to an abundance of outdoor recreational activities, to carbon sequestration, to a strong rural economy, our forests, big and small, must continue to be utilized for our needs today and for our future generations.

TAKING A HARD LOOK AT THE NATIONAL STOCKPILE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to pass my

bill, the Strengthening America's Strategic National Stockpile Act, so that we never again are dependent on foreign manufacturers for the supplies we need to keep Americans safe.

This bipartisan bill, brought to this Chamber by eight Democrats and eight Republicans, would make sure our country never again endures what we went through in those early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when we all received those urgent calls, only to learn that our stockpile, the national stockpile, would only provide a fraction of what we needed, many pieces inside expired, some of them molding.

This bill would ensure that we have a properly maintained national stockpile of medical supplies so that our doctors, nurses, and frontline workers have the personal protective equipment they need to protect themselves while helping others.

Put yourself back into the mindset of April 2020: frantic calls and e-mails from essential workers begging for help. As cases of COVID surged, both in our hospitals and in our nursing homes, our frontline workers made it clear that they simply didn't have enough protective equipment to keep themselves safe.

In fact, the National Institutes of Health conducted a study on why we have a shortage of protective equipment. Through that study, they found that the U.S. anticipated—we knew—that our national supply would come up short, and they estimated that we would need 3.5 billion N95 masks to protect Americans from a pandemic that affected only a third of our country. This is why we cannot move on without cleaning up our system.

In 2020, every Member of this body was hearing from doctors, nurses, and first responders who were bravely battling this disease and improvised face shields and homemade solutions to protect themselves.

I still think about the physician in Brighton, Michigan, who compared his job to being a soldier on the front lines, wearing only a T-shirt and a baseball cap instead of body armor and a helmet; or the nurses in Mason, Michigan, who had to share one gown, not per person, but for the entire staff on a COVID ward.

In response, I found myself doing anything and everything I could to secure protective equipment for Michigan: calling mask manufacturers, negotiating with companies in China, and fighting for each and every shipment. I was sending Ziplocs of 10 masks to our nursing homes individually. If a Congresswoman is negotiating in the dead of night with a Chinese middleman for masks, our supply chains have officially failed us.

This searing experience shook me to my core. We can and must do better to protect Americans and to learn from our mistakes.

This bill, the Strengthening America's Strategic National Stockpile Act, would ensure that if States ever need

to turn to it, our stockpile will be fully supplied, maintained, and ready to go.

It requires constant maintenance and inventory checks to make sure items aren't expired. We need to make the distribution process transparent. It helps States to create their own local stockpiles, and it prevents waste of taxpayer dollars by allowing the stockpile to sell excess supplies to other agencies before they expire.

Perhaps most importantly, this bill incentivizes production of critical medical supplies right here at home, in the United States. Through a \$500 million program, the stockpile will partner directly with American manufacturers to expand capacity and strengthen our domestic supply chains.

Now, in Michigan, we get it. Before the pandemic, the mere mention of supply chains was enough to put some to sleep. But the last year and a half has changed that. The issue is now on the front page of every paper and at the heart of every key business and policy decision.

From masks to microchips, the disruptions we have experienced have forced us to pull back the curtain and take a hard look at the systems we rely on in our daily lives. Michiganders have been saying this for 30 years. If you outsource our supply chains too far to China, it becomes a national security issue, and it has.

Here in Congress, we have a responsibility to respond to the way this crisis has shook our communities for our first responders and our businesses. I ask my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to vote "yes" on this critical piece of legislation. Help clean up the mess that was on display last year. That is our job and our responsibility to the next crisis.

HIGHLIGHTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TONY GONZALES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TONY GONZALES of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

There is a lot going on in the world right now, and it is very easy to forget that we have millions of Americans who are living in a very abusive environment.

Many people walk around with scars that everyone can see. But also, many of us walk around with scars that nobody can see. In particular, I would like to highlight the women who are in this very difficult situation.

When I was 5 years old, I recall when my mother woke me up in the middle of the night to sneak us out of our very abusive home, and I remember spending time in a battered women's shelter. That moment will never leave me.

Looking back at it now, my mother was the bravest woman that I knew then and the bravest woman that I know now.